VI\textsuperscript{th} International Congress of the European Association for Jewish Studies
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Lisa Anteby
The European Association for Jewish Studies organizes a congress every four years where scholars from Europe but also from the United States and Israel meet. The opening of this congress, in the magnificent restored synagogue del Transito, located in the old city of Toledo, was impressive. After speeches by city dignitaries, Professor Shlomo Morag of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem gave the opening lecture entitled: “The Oral Legacy and the Revival of Hebrew”. He began by reassuring his audience that he had prepared to lecture in a 86 degrees Fahrenheit weather but promised to shorten it, given that the temperature was well above 100! In fact, dozens of Castilian fans swept back and forth to the rhythm of his talk.

He opened his lecture with a brief history of Toledo, and humoristically associated his presentation with a possible derivation of the word Toledo from the Hebrew toldot, “legends”, “stories.” He went on to talk about the processes of preservation of the Hebrew language during the different periods of Jewish history and the function of the various traditions of reading and reciting sacred texts that contributed to maintaining Hebrew until this language became a full-fledged mode of communication for today’s Israelis. He concluded that one should speak nowadays not of revival of Hebrew but rather of a return to Hebrew.

The program ended with a recital by the famous Israeli singer-writer David Broza, himself born in Madrid and whose songs are inspired by Judeo-Spanish music. The notes of his last song, devoted to peace in Israel, echoed with deep emotion in this ancient synagogue where so many prayers had been recited more
than five centuries ago.

The following day the academic program began, divided in several sections: Bible; Rabbinical Literature; Philosophy and Jewish Thought; Hebrew and Jewish Languages (mostly Ladino and Yiddish); Ancient Jewish History (with two sessions on Philo of Alexandria); Medieval and Modern Jewish History; Medieval Jewish Literature; Judeo-Spanish and contemporary Literature (Hebrew poetry and fiction); Jewish Art and Music; Jewish Social Sciences (contemporary sociology); Jewish Librairies, Archives and Museums; and lastly, Sephardic Studies (Sephardic history and music; Marranos).

The Congress was attended by more than 200 historians, linguists, rabbis, sociologists, anthropologists, musicologists, curators and other scholars, dealing with Jewish studies within their own fields. This explains the impressive number of sessions and topics, sometimes amounting to nine parallel sessions, twice in the morning and twice in the afternoon, over four days for a total of more than 24 lectures daily! The audience included many Hispanic-speaking people as well as an important number of Spanish students interested in Jewish studies. Several Germans also attended, a number of Israelis, some Americans and a few French scholars (particularly historians, such as M. Hadas-Lebel, R. Goetschel and S. A. Goldberg, head of the Modern History section).

The dominant theme was certainly “Sephardic studies,” one of the topics bound to arise in a congress held in Toledo. In a place so laden with Jewish history, research on the Jews of Spain, the traditional sfarad, were honored and some sessions even took place entirely in Spanish, to the despair of the non-Hispanic speakers! In particular, several sessions were devoted to all the aspects of Sephardic Jewish life: history (especially during the medieval Spanish period), Judeo-Arab studies, Judeo-Spanish and Ladino languages, literature and music, in addition to the numerous sessions devoted to research on the Marranos.

Aside from these sessions, held in the building of the Castilla-la Mancha University, a plenary session took place every morning in the splendid Moorish-style courtyard. Each lecture on a general topic gave a state-of-the-arts view in the different fields. F. Garcia spoke about “The Impact of Fifty Years of Research on Qumran Studies;” S. Reif dealt with the question of “The Impact on Jewish Studies of a Century of Genizah Research”; G. Sed-Rajna presented a survey of “Studies on Jewish Art in the last Fifty Years” and P. Schafer shared his thoughts on “Jewish Mysticism in the Twentieth Century”.

I will focus on the sessions of the Modern Jewish History section, which I attended the most regularly. An large number of papers dealt with various aspects of the emancipation of the Jews and their relations with Christians in
different European countries. The examination of Dutch Christian treatises of the 18th century concerning the history and the fate of the Jews (J. Frishman) or the study of the impact of Emancipation on the rural Jewish communities of the Duchy of Sachsen-Meiningen (Thuringia) between 1811 and 1871 (A.-R. Löwenbrück) provided new data concerning the history of the Jews of that period.

Some lectures concentrated on the study of Jewish communities, especially in Italy, as was shown in the presentations on Jewish women's rights during the Italian Renaissance (K. Stow), the Jews of Syracuse (Sicily) in the 14th and 15th centuries (V. Morabito) and the establishment of a Jewish ghetto in Modena in the 17th century (D. Calabi). Data on the Jews of the Balearic islands (G. Mound), of whom many were Marranos, as well as a study of the Jewish presence in Mexico between 1580 et 1821 (J. Moran) shed new light on these groups at the fringes of Jewish history. Finally, two papers on contemporary communities set new directions for research: H. Avni developed a new model for the study of diasporas from the case of the Jews of Latin America, who differ, according to him, from the other “new Jewish diasporas” (in USA, Canada, Australia and South Africa) because of the de-legitimization of Jewish presence in these countries, the pluralistic nature (Ashkenazi, Sephardic and Oriental) of these communities, and the support from international Jewish organizations in increasing immigration towards South America. N. Baumel Joseph, on the other hand, showed in her study on the Jewish community from Irak settled in Montreal, that food is tightly connected to religious practice, the processes of modernization and the role of women in maintaining communal identity. She argued that greater research on the function of women in Jewish diasporas is needed.

The sessions that dealt with Jewish life in Eastern Europe and in Germany were paramount, with lectures on Jewish education in Hungary (V. Ba'nyai) and in Prague in the 20th century (V. Leininger) or on printing of Jewish books in Poland in the 16th-17th centuries (K. Pilarczyk). C. Weissler provided one of the only reports on Ashkenazi women’s life in the 16th century, in her paper that dealt with two tkhines, prayers recited by Jewish women in Poland. Extremely interesting papers were presented on German Jews: for example the concept of “Jewish” orientalism, found in the architecture of German synagogues or in the Arabic-inspired clothing of the first Zionists, which were later used by anti-Semites to highlight what made Jews “different” (I. Kalmar), Another paper on German Jewry discussed the ambivalent relationship between two leading figures of German Jewry, Scholem and Benjamin (A. David-Skinner). The study of the development of Jewish historiography in Nazi Germany (M. Brenner) or the analysis of “repatriation” of Polish Jews in the ‘30’s (Y. Weiss) also

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provided new insights into these issues. Finally, with the opening of the former Soviet Union, two lectures presented the research perspectives provided by the discovery of unpublished documents, such as those found in the YIVO in Vilna (E. Bramson), or recent access to the Russian archives, which represents an additional source of knowledge for Jewish history in that country (J. Klier). S. A. Goldberg summarized one of the prime issues concerning historians by approaching the question of temporality in Jewish studies and their relationship to the history as a discipline.

Lastly, a more limited set of presentations focused on modern Palestine and Zionism in particular. E. Antebi discussed new aspects to the motivations of the Baron de Rothschild concerning the creation of the Jewish colonies. S. Sufian described how the medical supplies given by the Americans to the Yishuu in 1916 constituted a political maneuver which strengthened the interests of the United States in the region. M. Simoni suggested looking at welfare institutions (in the area of education and health) under the British Mandate as instruments in the establishment of the power and the identity of the future State of Israel. Finally, with a rather provocative title, M. Raphael reported on the “crusade” between 1935-1948 of an anti-Zionist American rabbi. My own lecture formed the response, and dealt with present-day immigration to Israel, a country which some researchers already define as “post-Zionist”.

Overall, researchers still focused primarily on Europe, for instance the emancipation of the Jews or the culmination of German Jewry preceding the Holocaust. Regrettably, research on the social and historical aspects of contemporary Israel was absent. Unfortunately as well only a few studies on non-European Jewish communities were presented (even though a session of the sociology section dealt with issues of identity in Israel and the Diaspora).

Concerning the less academic activities, one afternoon was devoted to a guided tour of the Jewish quarter of Toledo, the juderia. A number of features bear witness to the Jewish life that once flourished in the city, such as the marks left on the lintels where mezouzot had been or the stars of David that one could see here and there on the walls of houses. In fact, the souvenir shops exploited the historical dimension, by exhibiting all kinds of objects decorated with Jewish themes. After a visit to the home of a former Marrano family, the walk ended in the synagogue Maria la Blanca, with its dozens of columns, which was converted to a church and now restored as a museum.

The evenings were also very busy, with outdoor events in the courtyard of the university building. The first evening, “Jewish tales from Morocco to Eastern Europe” were presented by a story teller of Moroccan origin. The second evening was devoted to a concert of Spanish classical music and the third to Judeo-Spanish songs heard throughout the world. Under the starry sky of
Castilla, these evening activities offered a delightful moment of rest to an audience of researchers, weary from the intensive days of the congress which had painted a broad picture of Jewish studies at the threshold of the 21st century.

Lisa Antebay
CFRJ